### ITALIAN MARRIAGES.

THE TIME WHEN PRIESTS RAN MATRI-MONIAL AGENCIES.

National Review.

In the fifteenth century, as soon as an Italian girl had attained her twelfth year she was considered legally marriageable. The sumptuary laws of Genoa and Venice permitted her to wear gold and silver brocade, rich velvets and silks, and to cover her person with jewels, the better to attract the attention of such young gentlemen as were admitted to her society. On her twelfth birthday being magnificently arrayed, she was led to the parish church on foot under a canopy of white and crimson silk by her parents who, as may well be imagined, wore on so solemn an occasion their richest attires. A band of music marched in front, playing a lively tune, and all the neighborhood turned out to see the sposina, who, after mass, on her return to her family palace held a reception, in which with a good deal of adroitness eligible young gentlemen were paraded before her mother and herself. If she chanced to take the fancy of one of those youths, it was etiquette for him to pass for a week or so at a determined hour every day in front of her house, so that she could take a sly glance at him through the lattice, and even drop him a flower if she felt so inclined and receive in return a sonnet. As the courtship progressed, the young gentleman was allowed to serenade the girl, generally very late at night. He did not always sing himself, which was, perhaps providential, but appeared with a band of hired musicians and singers, and if he was rich and liberal he selected the best professional artists he could procure, to make an enduring impression on the sposina.

About a week previous to the wedding the bride's parents gave a grand recevimento (reception) to all their friends to introduce the sposo and the members of his family. This entertainment usually ended with a grand banquet, preceded by the signing of the legal documents connected with the wedding, of which, fortunately, thousands still exist.

The dowers of the Venetian, Genoese, and Florentine ladies were nothing like as large as those of the Roman. Indeed, the sumptuary laws of the three great republics limited the dowers of brides to a sum never exceeding £4,000. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the priests interfered a great deal in matchmaking; and in the archives of Genoa we find a great many instances of priests being sued for obtaining an undue percentage on the dowers of brides, and also indications that some of these worthies kept a sort of matrimonial agency.

### MELTED THE GRIMY ENGINEER

Little Golden-Hair's Gratitude for Bringing Papa and Mamma Home Safe. Oakland (Cal.) Enquirer.

Even in the life of the grimy railroad engineer, whose existence is one of almost constant danger, there sometimes falls a spark of light and a ray of human sunshine illuminates his smoky cab, penetrates his greasy blouse and finds its way deep down into his breast.

A little incident happened down at the mole the other evening after the arrival of the overland train, which, though of a simple nature, will long be remembered by a certain C. P. engineer. The great fron monster attached to the train was throbbing and puffing after the long and sinuous trip over mountain sides and rock defiles, trembling trestles and marshy stretches. The din in the depot was deafening, but out of the chaos of sounds a sweet, girlish voice was heard welcoming home her parents, who had arrived on the train. She was a little golden-haired beauty, scarcely 6 years of age, with a quick, intelligent eye and a loving nature, to which she gave full vent in the radiant and impulsive way she welcomed her fond parents back. At last they took her by the hand and proceeded to-ward the waiting ferry-boat. As they passed by the engine belonging to the train the little one broke away, ran up to the big black machine, and patted the driving-wheels affectionately with her little white hands. Looking up at the smokestack, she said: "You good, big old iron horse, you have brought back my papa and mamma safe over the fearful mountains to their little girl, and I want to thank you, even if you don't care for me because I am so little; and you, too," she continued, turning her face wistfully toward the grimy engineer, who was leaning out of the cab window, "I love you both." Then she kissed her hand to him and was gone like a ray of suppling a ray of sunshine.

Just then a fleeting sunbeam from the great orb sinking down into the Golden Gate came stealing through a chink in the depot and stole by the engineer into his cab. There was a strange look on his face for an instant, and all at once the depot was dark and lonesome. When he turned his head into the cab there were two light spots on the cheeks of his dustbegrimed face.

The Beggars of Europe.

New York Letter. "Ever since I was abroad," said a wellknown New Yorker, "I have been pestered with all sorts of begging letters. They are mostly from the managers of English charitable institutions of various descriptions, though some are from private individuals. The former inclose a variety of printed mat-The former inclose a variety of printed matter illustrating the purposes and work of the institution; the latter are abject appeals of apparently professional begging letter writers, with whom London abounds. I was talking with a friend about it, and he said he had the same experience for about two years after he had built a fine house here, a description of which and his wealth got into the local papers. He was deluged with begging letters from almost every capital in Europe, and especially from London."

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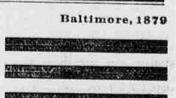
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